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General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

230th Meeting
Friday, 23 April 1999, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Abdelaziz . . . . . (Egypt)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Organizational matters

The Chairman (*spoke in Arabic*): During this meeting we will hear the progress reports of the Chairmen of the three Working Groups. After that I will adjourn this meeting and convene the meeting of the Committee of the Whole to discuss the proposals of the Secretary-General for the mid-term plan covering the years 2001 to 2005. As members may recall, the document on this matter was circulated under symbol A/CN.10/1999/CRP.2 at the meetings of the Working Groups earlier this week.

If there is no objection, we will proceed accordingly.

It is so decided.

Members have before them informal paper No. 3, which contains the programme of work for the last phase of this session. Members will note that the Bureau has decided to allocate a little more time to Working Groups I and III, as the progress made by Working Group II indicates that it will require less time to complete its work.

I would also like to draw the attention of the Commission to the fact that the reports of Working Groups I and III are to be approved on Wednesday, 28 April. However, Working Group II will have one additional meeting, on Thursday morning, if necessary.

I believe this will somewhat offset the imbalance in the allocation of time to the Groups. I am sure that the Chairmen of the Working Groups will do their best to comply with this schedule.

Reports by Chairmen of Working Groups

The Chairman (*spoke in Arabic*): I call on the Chairman of Working Group I.

Mr. Izquierdo (Ecuador), Chairman of Working Group I (*spoke in Spanish*): We have completed the following stages since beginning our work in Working Group I. First of all, delegations were able to make general statements and comments on the Chairman's working paper as a whole. There was then a preliminary study of each section of that document. Subsequently, the document was considered paragraph by paragraph, and each delegation made its proposals on the text.

Yesterday, with the distribution of a document compiling all of the proposals submitted, we began a drafting process that will enable us to find common language to facilitate the necessary consensus. This process, which began yesterday, has been moving forward quickly, enabling us to make substantial progress. Within this process, intensified consultations on issues that are still controversial might enable us to finish today. That would give us an opportunity to offer delegations a revised document that reflects, in what I believe to be the best and broadest way possible, the level of consensus achieved. I hope that that document will be available today so that we can begin to review it next week.

The Chairman (*spoke in Arabic*): I call on the Chairman of Working Group II.

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This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Mr. Effendi (Indonesia), Chairman of Working Group II: I wish to report that the Commission allocated time to Working Group II for eight formal meetings in the past two weeks. Within that allocated time, the Working Group held five meetings. With kind understanding, the members of the Working Group gave their approval to the Chairman's use of the other three allocated time slots, and of other available time, to undertaking intensive private consultations with those delegations most directly interested.

As members are aware, the Working Group used, as a basis for its work, the paper presented by the Chairman last year, as contained in the report of the Commission in document A/53/42. When the Working Group started its meetings last week, approximately seven issues were introduced by delegations to be incorporated into the Chairman's paper. During those meetings, it was also apparent that the vast majority of the Working Group could not accept the Chairman's paper as it is. But they also showed flexibility with regard to the Chairman's finding a solution to the seven issues introduced.

After negotiations in the Working Group and intensive private consultations, we are now down to two issues only. The other issues were not resolved through amendments but through an exchange of views which led to common understanding.

Of the two issues to be resolved, one is very minor, and I am confident that we will find a solution through consensus in the Working Group, as it will involve just a fine-tuning adjustment to the text. On the second issue, I also have reason to be optimistic. The results of private consultations with the delegation most directly interested — I stress that the consultations were at the delegation level — show that there is no serious objection to the proposed compromise solution. The delegation merely requested the opportunity to report to its capital for guidance on the compromise solution.

The plans for future meetings will be as follows: after the adjournment of this plenary meeting, I hope to be given the chance to finalize my private consultations. This afternoon, I will formally present the result of the consultations to the members of the Working Group as a whole for their consideration. On Monday, I intend to continue the deliberations at the Working Group level. This will also give ample time to delegations to use the weekend to consult with their capitals. Should we reach a consensus by Monday, I will ask the members of the Working Group to give the Chairman an opportunity to sit down with the Secretariat to draw up the report of the Working Group so that it can be considered by the members for the whole day on Tuesday. Should the Working Group be able to finalize its draft report, I will submit that draft report to you on Wednesday, Mr. Chairman, as you requested. I understand that you and the Secretariat also need adequate time to draft the reports of the Commission.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude for the cooperation and understanding extended by the members of the Working Group. Without their cooperation and constructive spirit we could not be so near to achieving a consensus. I hope this constructive spirit of cooperation will also prevail in the few remaining hours of our negotiations. Should we reach a consensus on the objectives and agenda of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV), I am confident that members will agree that such a consensus would constitute a giant leap forward towards our common endeavour to convene that special session. Once again, I should like to express my gratitude to the members of the Working Group and to you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman (*spoke in Arabic*): The report of the Chairman of Working Group II reflects marked progress in the work of that Group. I hope that the work will be successful and that the necessary political will exists to maintain the agreement that has been reached at the delegation level.

I now call on the Chairman of Working Group III.

Mr. Hoey (Ireland), Chairman of Working Group III: As a result of the intensive consultations that I was able to have before the Disarmament Commission began its work, I was able to present a Chairman's paper to the Working Group when it commenced its work, which it found to be an acceptable basis for further work. Since then, we have had a series of intensive discussions on the substance and layout of the paper and, of course, on its content. Following an initial exchange of views, I prepared a revised version of the Chairman's working paper, which has enabled us to advance our work and to isolate those areas where particular difficulties emerged.

Following further discussions, we were able to isolate, down to four or five outstanding problems, the issues that we still need to address in the days remaining. It is my intention to hold some further consultations this morning with a view to seeking compromise solutions on

the remaining outstanding problems. I have been very fortunate as Chairman to have all delegations take a very constructive approach; they have shown what I believe to be considerable flexibility and a spirit of compromise in helping us to advance our work.

The paper is complex. It addresses a number of issues which are extremely sensitive, and therefore there is a great need to ensure that the language that we have in this document is acceptable to all delegations. That is why we are spending a considerable amount of time on certain sections that are of particular importance.

Following this meeting, I hope to hold a series of informal consultations in Conference Room E. The delegations that I have arranged to see at 11 a.m. and at 12 noon are aware of the formations in which they will come, and we will talk about the problems. I am very confident that the existing spirit of compromise that all delegations are showing will mean that early next week we will be able to reach agreement on a final Chairman's text.

The Chairman (*spoke in Arabic*): The report of the Chairman of Working Group III also reflects clear progress in the work of that Working Group.

Does any delegation wish to make a statement concerning the work of the three Working Groups or of the Commission in general?

Mr. Krokhmal (Ukraine): We would like to take this opportunity to make a brief statement of a general character.

Since we are taking the floor for the first time, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, the members of the Bureau and the Chairmen of the Working Groups on the occasion of your election to these important posts. We are confident that your experience will guide us through a productive discussion, and we assure you of our full support and cooperation.

The recent meetings of the Working Groups demonstrated the constructive approach of delegations to continuing dialogue motivated by the high objectives of disarmament.

Regrettably, a continuing erosion of the disarmament process remains a fact of current international life. When armed conflicts are taking place in various hot spots of the world, the mitigation of their negative humanitarian consequences requires proper solutions.

It is very important to underline that the global disarmament process and the maintenance of international peace and security are interrelated, and the role of the United Nations in both processes continues to be decisive.

Ukraine, a State that voluntarily renounced its nuclear arsenal, the third largest in the world, attaches great importance to the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, an issue currently on the agenda of Working Group I. The initiatives undertaken by various States in this respect — in particular, Mongolia's decision to declare its territory a nuclear-weapon-free zone — should be positively assessed mainly in terms of how they enhance non-proliferation and help achieve the ultimate objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons. At this stage, when more than 100 States have established such zones, they become a significant factor to be examined within the framework of regional and global structures and security measures.

In previous sessions of the Commission the Ukrainian delegation made clear its position that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones should be fully based on arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned.

We consider the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) a unique opportunity to give new impetus to the implementation of General Assembly decisions. In accordance with such decisions, SSOD IV will address a number of extensive issues regarding disarmament. In this regard, a balanced agenda and a consensus-oriented approach to the consideration of every item are of great importance for the achievement of our far-reaching objectives.

My delegation supports the concepts set forth in the guidelines on conventional arms control in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N. We would like to reiterate that the Ukrainian delegation supports every effort aimed at the development and implementation of these concepts.

We are also of the view that there is a need for increased transparency regarding all types of conventional arms. In this respect, we consider that supplementing the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms with similar, effective instruments at the regional level will contribute substantially to the whole set of measures in this field.

I wish to assure you, Mr. Chairman, of my delegation's cooperation in your continued efforts to reach consensus on the important agenda items.

Mr. Tomaszewski (Poland): Today my delegation is speaking on behalf of the following countries of the Central and Eastern European region: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and my own country, Poland.

The representative of Germany already spoke, on the very first day of our deliberations, on the position of the European Union and associated countries regarding the work of the 1999 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. We have fully associated ourselves with that statement. The reason we have decided to take the floor today is that — notwithstanding our unequivocal position on the so-called nuclear-weapon-free space in Central and Eastern Europe, as proposed by Belarus, and notwithstanding the very controversial resolution of the last session of the General Assembly, supported by only one third of the United Nations membership — the delegation of Belarus has brought this proposal back to the current session of the Disarmament Commission.

Therefore, we would like to reiterate our common position on the Belarus proposal. Our countries have on different occasions expressed their favourable attitude towards the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as complementary instruments to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. At the same time, however, we consider that such zones must not interfere with existing or evolving security arrangements to the detriment of regional and international security. Such zones should not adversely affect the inalienable right to individual or collective self-defence guaranteed by the Charter of the United Nations.

Against this background, we consider the Belarus proposal not to be in line with our sovereign resolve to contribute to and benefit from the new European security architecture. Furthermore, the Belarus proposal is being advanced in international forums, first, in disregard of the wishes of the countries of the region concerned and, secondly, in violation of the basic and universally agreed principle that nuclear-weapon-free zones should be based on arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. This is definitely not the case with our region.

We have noted that the Belarus proposal is not receiving substantial support from the Disarmament Commission at this session, although we are concerned that this forum is being used to serve some political purposes rather than the idea of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Our delegations strongly urge the representatives of Belarus not to insist on the proposals they have presented in Working Group I.

Mr. Li Changhe (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First, I would like to thank the Chairman of Working Group II for his report on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The Chinese delegation is aware that consultations have achieved considerable progress. Last week those consultations were mainly devoted to the concerns of certain countries. This does not mean, however, that other countries do not have their own very important concerns. For instance, the Chinese delegation has the following two concerns, which I would like to state in English.

(*spoke in English*)

First, we are concerned by the international situation since the first special session and during the post-cold-war era and by trends at the global, regional and subregional levels — in particular the recent negative developments and their implications for the international disarmament process, peace and security.

Secondly, we are concerned also by the implications of the development, deployment and proliferation of anti-missile systems and compliance with the relevant treaties.

(*spoke in Chinese*)

Of course, on the other hand, the Chinese delegation also hopes that we can maintain the results that have been achieved over the past three years, because in that period a delicate balance has been reached. The challenge is to take into account the special concerns of certain countries while maintaining that delicate balance. In future consultations the Chinese delegation will continue to endeavour to find a solution.

The Chairman (*spoke in Arabic*): In this respect, I wish to make clear the following. The progress achieved in Working Group II was the result of the efforts deployed by all States and all members, including concessions on the part of many States that put forward proposals at the beginning of the meetings of the Working Group. For this I wish to express my

appreciation and that of the Chairman of the Working Group.

I hope that we can muster the political will that is necessary to maintain the preliminary agreement reached at the level of the Chairmen of the Working Groups. I hope that sufficient efforts will be made in our various capitals to preserve this consensus so that we will have the opportunity to adopt a working paper at the end of the session.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.